

Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets Mission Statement

Facilitate, support and encourage the growth and viability of agriculture while protecting the working landscape, human health, animal health, plant health, consumers and the environment.

Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets Vision Statement

The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets will help to develop a safe, secure, ecologically responsive, profitable and fair local foods system for Vermont and Vermont customers which will enable Vermont to be a leader and participant in the global food system. The Agency will do this by assuming a leadership position important to the evolving food system, through access to and the application of resources (human, financial, social and environmental) and by supporting the creation of new opportunities.

Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

Description of Appropriations, Divisions & Programs

The Agency has a significant role in the Governor's Ecosystem Restoration Program to improve and protect Vermont's water quality that tackles the problem of phosphorus runoff through a comprehensive and accelerated cleanup program. This multi-million dollar project is administered by the Agency of Agriculture and the Agency of Natural Resources.

The ADMINISTRATION Division provides oversight and direction for the entire Agency to include policy development, legal counsel, and enforcement actions. In addition, it conducts agricultural land use planning, develops the biennial report and provides business and research services for the Agency. The Stipend Program (awards to agricultural fairs and field days to encourage agricultural events) and Licensing and Registration Unit are administered through this division.

Funding Sources: *General Fund* *Special Funds* *Federal Funds*

The FOOD SAFETY AND CONSUMER ASSURANCE Division serves to:

- *Assure that all facilities processing meat and poultry for intrastate commerce are inspected to certify that proper ante mortem and post mortem procedures are performed and sanitary standards are maintained.

- *Assure only inspected and passed meat and poultry products are commercially distributed and to investigate illegal or improper sales and consumer complaints.

- *Assure that only wholesome, unadulterated and truthfully labeled products reach Vermont consumers.

- *Assure those establishments not subject to traditional inspection (wholesalers, retailers and custom operations) are periodically reviewed for sanitary condition, proper labeling, and handling.

- *Prevent the adulteration of meat and poultry products by the indiscriminate use of antibiotics through an agreement with the Federal Drug Administration.

*Assure species, such as rabbits and game birds that are not normally inspected are processed in a sanitary facility when they are to be sold to restaurants in Vermont. This is done in conjunction with the Department of Health.

*Protect Vermont's domestic bee populations from injurious insect and disease pests through technical assistance, hive inspection, and quarantine programs.

*Assure an adequate supply of pure fresh milk and maintain uniform dairy standards.

*Establish appropriate dairy laws to protect the public health and welfare.

*Promote and protect the health and welfare of animals in the State of Vermont and enhance the viability of our animal industries.

*Protect public health, maintain and improve the integrity of Vermont agricultural products.

*Responsible for legally mandated testing and inspection programs involving agricultural product grading, weights and measures inspection and licensing.

*Provide monitoring of product quality, method of sale, proper weight and measure of products offered for sale, and scanner accuracy.

*Provide training for agricultural product quality relating to apples, eggs, potatoes, and maple products, and all aspects of weights and measures.

Funding Sources: *General Fund* *Special Funds* *Federal Funds* *Inter-Departmental Transfers*
Global Commitment

The AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT Division supports and develops Vermont's agricultural industry by providing leadership, technical and business expertise, and coordination of the following:

*Analyze key agricultural sectors to determine appropriate investment and focus of Vermont's development resources. Sectors include: organic dairy, artisanal cheese and livestock for meat.

*Identify and assist in developing new markets, local and out of state, for Vermont agricultural products.

Develop individual growth strategies for each sector of the agricultural industry.

*Improve the economy of the state and competitive position of the dairy industry by increasing the consumption of dairy products.

*Administer the Vermont Working Landscape Enterprise program to include managing both the Vermont Agricultural and Forrester Products Development Board and the Working Landscape Enterprise Board. FY2015's budget request includes moving the Working Landscape Enterprise Initiative from a one-time appropriation into the Agricultural Development base budget.

*Promote the development of innovative agricultural energy and nutrient management business through leadership and recruitment.

Funding Sources: *General Fund* *Special Funds* *Federal Funds* *Inter-Departmental Transfers*

The LABS, AGRICULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP Division has several key objectives and strategies to manage including:

*Implementing the agricultural provisions of the Governor's Ecosystem Restoration Program to improve statewide water quality and to meet the EPA approved clean-up plan to limit the Phosphorus Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) in Vermont's waterways thus protecting the water quality in the Lake Champlain basin and other Vermont lakes, rivers and streams. This involves efforts to limit pollution through:

*Offering financial incentives to farmers to protect waterways by establishing and maintaining vegetated buffers along the waterways of Vermont.

*Developing and implementing alternative manure management technologies and techniques.

Protecting groundwater and surface water quality from agricultural non-point source pollution by enforcing accepted agricultural practices, pesticide regulations, providing technical and financial assistance to the farm community, participating in the watershed planning process on behalf of farmers, and administering the permit process for medium and large farms.

*Assuring Vermont crops are free of injurious pests by providing technical assistance, quarantine activities, field and shipping point inspections and crop and pest monitoring activities.

*Protecting public health and the environment from the adverse effects of pesticide products through training, licensing, monitoring, disposal grants, enforcement, education and product registration for pesticide applicators, dealers, manufacturers, and the general public.

*Providing mosquito districts or municipalities with financial and technical assistance, such as, adult and larval surveys and assistance for control programs in order to reduce mosquito populations below nuisance population levels or levels capable of vectoring disease.

*Registering, inspecting and analyzing commercial feed and pet food products, commercial feed facilities, commercial and specialty fertilizer products and facilities, and seed products to assure they meet standards and their stated guarantees.

*Providing serological, microbiological and chemical analysis of Vermont's agricultural products, agricultural inputs and environmental samples in support of the Agency's regulatory and technical assistance programs

Funding Sources: *General Fund* *Special Funds* *Federal Funds* *Global Commitment* *Inter-Departmental Transfers*

KEY BUDGET ISSUES for the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets are as follows:

MOSQUITO CONTROL - WEST NILE VIRUS - EEE: Enhancement of these programs has increased our FY2015 GF budget request by \$124,787 over FY2014. Included in this enhancement is additional funding for temporary field & lab technicians to increase surveillance, and additional operating costs to cover analysis and testing costs.

WORKING LANDSCAPE ENTERPRISE: FY2015 moves the Working Landscape Enterprise Initiative into the Agricultural Development GF base budget. A \$75K increase, which brings funding to \$1.5 million, will continue the work of the Working Landscape Enterprise program that began in FY2013.

MEAT INSPECTORS (Food Safety Specialists): Demand from the growing meat slaughter and processing industry has surpassed staffing levels to the point the Section Chief and Assistant State Veterinarian are filling in so facilities can operate. Additional businesses are expected to open in 2014 & 2015 further increasing the demand for inspection services. This FY2015 budget includes two additional Food Safety Specialist positions, funded 47/53 between GF and federal dollars, to allow the agency to meet its regulatory requirements and continue to foster growth in the meat slaughter and processing industry.